

Young (M.)

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

OF

GEORGETOWN COLLEGE,



✓

BY NOBLE YOUNG, M. D.,  
PROFESSOR OF THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

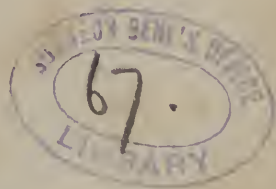
Delivered at the Smithsonian Institution March 8, 1860.

WASHINGTON:  
HENRY POLKINHORN, PRINTER.  
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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WASHINGTON, *March 9, 1860.*

Prof. NOBLE YOUNG:

DEAR SIR: On behalf of the Graduating Class, we, the undersigned, respectfully request a copy of your Valedictory Address for publication.

Very respectfully,

A. G. BROWNING,  
JOHN W. DAVIS,  
JAS. H. PEABODY,

*Committee.*

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WASHINGTON, *March 9, 1860.*

GENTLEMEN: Your note of the 9th, requesting, on behalf of the Graduating Class, a copy of the Valedictory Address, has been duly received. I comply most cheerfully with the request, at the same time thank you most sincerely for the compliment.

With respect, your obedient servant,

N. YOUNG, M. D.

Doctors A. G. BROWNING, JOHN W. DAVIS, and

JAS. H. PEABODY, *Committee.*



## VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

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You have arrived, gentlemen, at the most interesting period of your lives. Your elementary education is completed, and you are about to enter upon the labors and contend for the honors of a professional career. We are here to-night to inaugurate this transit from professional youth to professional manhood; to clothe you with the *toga virilis*, and wish you God-speed in your course. We are to be honored or discredited by your future course, and though the past evidences of your pupilage justify our highest hopes and most confident calculations, still, our interest in you may excuse some anxiety, and warrant us in giving some parting admonition.

At this point, it is meet that you pause to consider earnestly, to reflect seriously, upon the duties of your future lives, the various relations in which you will be placed, and adopt principles which shall govern you. To discharge your duties properly, you must continue to be students, must become men of science; you must be Christians, gentlemen, and good citizens. You are about to enter upon the practice of the most useful, the noblest, highest calling which God has permitted man to pursue—one which, perhaps, involves, more than any other, the active exercise of those gifts which the Creator has bestowed upon his creatures—one in which more of head and heart are concerned, than any other, and for the proper discharge of whose duties here on earth you will be held to the strictest accountability hereafter.

Every year is adding to the opportunities for the cultivation of the various sciences which contribute to the development of the resources of Medicine, by unfolding a knowledge of new laws of nature, applicable to the investigation and treatment of Disease; much more, therefore, will be required of you than of your predecessors. Medicine is ceasing to be an art, dependent upon observation and experience alone; it is assuming the precision of a Science. Examination through the sense of hearing, has been added in our day; regions hidden from the sight may now be explored by the Stethoscope—the practised ear detecting with perfect accuracy the very commencement of disease, which, in former days, was only seen in results, and when too late for the efficacy of remedies. This instrument is to the ear what the microscope is to the eye, and its introduction forms an epoch in Medicine.

By the aid of Chemical Science, the modern Physician is enabled to examine minutely the various fluids and solids of the body, thereby detecting disease in its inception, viewing it in its progress, and estimating so exactly its character, as to render simple the means of prevention and of cure. By the same assistance, the nature of remedial agents is disclosed—the active separated from the inert principles, and made more efficient in their application to the removal of disease.

The Microscope, the Ophthalmoscope, and the Speculum, are aiding in bringing to view that which is hidden from the unaided eye. The condition of the various cavities is submitted to our inspection, and the most accurate knowledge of them afforded, both in health and disease. Mechanical ingenuity has armed the Surgeon with increased facilities for the relief of the many injuries submitted to his care, whilst the discovery of Anesthetics has furnished him with the means of assuaging the anguish inseparable from his various operations. Pathological Anatomy is giving daily the results of diseased action, to exhibit error, or establish the truth of diagnosis. Statistical returns are furnishing us with the



means of ascertaining with accuracy the influence of various agents in the production of disease, the preservation of health, and the comparative value of different modes of treatment. Many of the doctrines which have heretofore governed Pathologists, are undergoing re-investigation—errors are brought to light, and sounder views adopted. The Physician of this day has learned to reason more logically. He is no longer swayed by the edicts of schools or sects, based upon purely speculative hypotheses, but examines for himself every theory, weighs each fact as presented, and submits it to the tests afforded by his superior knowledge of the laws of nature.

In this modern march of improvement, we have good reason to be proud of the achievements of our own countrymen. Contrast the condition of Medicine in the United States with what it was only a century ago. In 1750 the first dissection was made in this country, to impart a knowledge of anatomy to students. The city of New York is entitled to this honor, by the hands of Doctors John Bard and Peter Middleton. In 1756, a course of lectures on anatomy and surgery was delivered in Newport, Rhode Island, by Dr. William Hunter, with dissections, but no regularly organized school of medicine was established until 1765, when the one in Philadelphia, now known as the University of Pennsylvania, was founded by Doctors Shippen and Morgan. This was followed in 1767 by the New York School, now known as the College of Physicians and Surgeons; then the Medical School of Harvard College in 1782; that of Dartmouth College, 1797, founded by Dr. Nathan Smith, father of the present professor of surgery in the University of Maryland, and who, for nearly twelve years, alone sustained all the duties of the medical department. The College of Medicine of Maryland in 1807, made in 1810 into the University of Maryland, and founded by Dr. John B. Davidge, of Baltimore, who commenced lecturing to six students in 1804; the College of

Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District of New York, in 1812; the Medical School of Yale College in 1813; Medical College of Ohio, 1818; Vermont Academy of Medicine, and Medical School of Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, in the same year; the Medical School of Maine, attached to Bowdoin College in 1820; Medical Department of Brown University, Rhode Island, in 1821; the Medical Department of the University of Vermont, 1822; in the same year the Berkshire Medical School, attached to William's College, in Massachusetts; the Medical College of South Carolina, and the Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia, 1824; following these, we have had added, the Medical Department of the University of Virginia; medical schools in Richmond, Virginia; in Nashville, Tennessee; St. Louis, Missouri; New Orleans; Louisville, Kentucky; Chicago, Illinois—and most of the States south and west, as well as in our own city.

Besides this provision for medical education by medical institutions, all but four of which have been established during the first half of this century, we have now in every State, and almost in every county in the different States, organized Medical Societies, for the promotion of the interests of the profession, the cultivation of medical science, and the preservation of the public from the evils of Quackery.

During this period of unexampled progress, many of our profession have distinguished themselves, and acquired a world-wide reputation in the various departments of medicine and surgery. The achievements of our surgeons, *accoucheurs*, and practitioners of medicine, and the various works written by them, will compare favorably with those of any other country. Translated into the different languages, and disseminated throughout the countries of the world, they have assisted in raising us to the rank of equals with the most favored, and contributed to that respect which the American citizen now enjoys throughout the civilized world.

The student of medicine is no longer obliged to go abroad for his medical education, as formerly: he has the most ample means at his door. In every State he has abundant facilities for private and public instruction in the elements of his profession, and in many places the most extensive means for practical education in its duties. The city of New York, with its million of inhabitants, is now behind no city in the world in the material elements for practical clinical instruction; and the ability of the professors in our medical schools, and the conductors of the many infirmaries, dispensaries, and hospitals in the various cities of our country, is amply competent to the most complete medical education. Year by year these resources are increasing, and the time may not be far distant when there will be seen students from every quarter of the globe, hastening to our great medical centres, to enjoy the benefits of education.

What emotions arise naturally in the breast of every lover of his country, and particularly of the medical man, by this relection! A land which, two hundred and fifty years ago, was an unbroken wilderness; whose rivers rushed to mingle their waters with the ocean, and her hills towered to heaven in unobserved majesty; whose teeming soil yielded nutriment only for the brute or the Indian; where the repose of nature was never disturbed, its perpetual quiet never broken, save by the roar of wild beasts, or the conflicts of savage men! Its

“Mighty scenes, in Nature’s morning made,  
While still, in rich magnificence of prime,  
She poured her wonders lavishly sublime.”

A country, in this short space of time, seen foremost in the race of excellence, in commerce, manufactures, and the arts and sciences, offering, with unfolded arms and the most bounteous hospitality, an asylum to the oppressed of all nations, and before all, the most abundant means, the most extended facilities for the acquisition of a knowledge of that

art which is required for the preservation of our species—instruction in that calling which God himself has commanded to be honored.

Your most active interest will be excited, gentlemen, in the suppression of Quackery—in preventing charlatans from imposing upon the credulity of the public, to their serious injury, to the injury of the interests, and insult to the dignity of our profession. This, as you have been told in the eloquent address of a worthy colleague, must be effected, not by ridicule, but by placing yourselves upon ground higher than they, making yourselves more efficient, by education, for the relief of the sufferer, and demonstrating most clearly the superiority of your attainments. Now, wide-spread are the evils affecting humanity, which demand our attention in this day. There is probably more open, bare-faced quackery in this country than in any other on the globe. We have been called a fast people: we are fast, even in regard to disease. The American must be cured of his maladies at once—he has not time to be sick any more than he has for relaxation from business. The nostrum is tempting to such a man; he sees a speedy cure in its vaunted promises. The slower, but more philosophical means of treatment, based upon principles, he does not understand, and is too slow.

Science itself has been made tributary to the lust for fortune. The advanced condition of chemical science has furnished the means to the unprincipled of imposing upon the community spurious articles, from which they derive profit whilst health is destroyed. Our wines and liquors, which, I am sorry to say, are used more lavishly than a purer beverage, are so adulterated as to be a source of the most destructive forms of disease. To this may be added over-taxation of brain and nerves in the pursuit of gain, or the ambition of early distinction, which may be called, *par excellence*, an American vice. You have in these, sources of disease, which as medical philosophers you must examine, as men of science



have the ability to understand, as moralists and Christians, the counsels to correct, and as practitioners, the ability to relieve from their effects.

In this work, there must be unity of action, honesty of purpose. We are materially assisted in this by the establishment of the National Medical Association, a congress of physicians, representing every section of our country, bringing annually the results of investigations in science; the practical observations of our ablest men, exciting the most laudable rivalry in the ranks of our profession; add to this, men thrown together from the east, the west, the north, and the south, form attachments from their communion, have prejudices removed, and return to their homes more tolerant of difference of opinion arising from sectional interests, and more zealous devotees not only to their profession but to the preservation of our happy Union.

This organization gives us the ability to bring to bear the whole weight of medical public opinion upon subjects interesting to us, and of vital importance to the public.

This Association assisted, efficiently, in procuring the passage of the law, originated by Dr. Edwards, a member of Congress from Ohio, and a member of the Association, requiring the inspection of imported drugs at the different sea-ports, thus excluding spurious articles, not only inert as remedial agents, but positively hurtful.

It affords us also the means of acquiring the most accurate information in regard to the history of endemic and epidemic diseases, their nature and their treatment; medical topography; climatic influences; and a yearly estimate of the progress of our science in its various departments.

In every community the society of the physician is cultivated. He is welcome to all; his counsels are respectfully received; his intimate relations to all, high and low, enable him to exercise an influence upon public opinion in regard to many subjects, to point out the infallible results of popular

vices. You should never tire of this work; there is more to be done than ever before by the physician, in correcting modern errors—evils which are sapping the very vitals of society, by corrupting physically, as well as morally—whilst disease is more amenable to treatment, by being better understood, and the means of cure more extended, the increase of sudden death is alarming, produced by agents invisible to the victim. Scarcely a day elapses without a record of some startling sudden death, the result of disease engendered long before by vicious practices. When these are seen in their inception, your duty will be to point out their inevitable termination. Avail yourselves of every opportunity to warn the subject, as he proceeds step by step in his career, and avert his ruin.

You, gentlemen, belong to the rising generation of medical men. You are to become the active men of the profession: to take the place of those who are passing away. To you are entrusted the interests and duties of the profession. You are to form part of that body upon whom the public rely for advice and protection from disease and injury. Look well to your trust; arm yourselves with the means to discharge it faithfully.

Amongst the many troubles you will have to encounter, not the least will be the prejudices of the public upon the subject of new remedies, or new modes of treatment of disease. They regard them as innovations, and you as experimenters, and he must be a bold man who will oppose those sentiments. Yet there must be that boldness, for all knowledge of the philosophy of treatment, and of the nature of disease, is possessed alone by the physician; there is no subject of which the public is so entirely ignorant.

I remember well, that a little more than thirty years ago, the use of cold water as a drink after calomel, was considered the most certain means of producing salivation, and even death; and never shall forget the fear and trembling with

which I first administered it, and the triumph of my success in calming irritability, assuaging the pangs of febrile thirst, and assisting materially in shortening the paroxysm of fever. Now, you know, the whole medical world has adopted the practice, and the public are becoming accustomed to its use, and willing to receive its benefits. A more striking instance of this prejudice, carrying not only the public but most of our profession, to most extreme and violent opposition, occurred upon the introduction of inoculation for small-pox in this country. This was practised first by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, of Massachusetts, in June, 1771, upon his only son, and his two servants, successfully. For this he incurred the most violent opposition and denunciation of his professional brethren, as well as the officers of the town in which he lived. He had his windows broken by the mob, and himself pelted with stones as he walked the streets. He was not deterred, however, for in that and the next year, he inoculated two hundred and forty-seven persons, out of which number only six died, while of five thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine who took the disease in the natural way, eight hundred and forty-four died. Thus the moral courage of this distinguished physician was the means of establishing a comparatively safe mode of prevention of this fatal scourge. The same fate, to a certain extent, befel the great Junner, who first introduced vaccination, and gave us what is now relied upon by the whole world as a safe means of staying the desolation of the pestilence of small-pox. These instances, of many, are cited that their results may incite you to emulate the boldness and decision of these great men, whenever assured of the truth of your opinions, and prompted by your duty to your patients and the public.

In your course through life, cultivate purity of thought, simplicity of life, charity and benevolence to your fellowman; be patient under exactions, firm in your purpose, but kind in its maintenance. You must abandon yourselves entirely to the

practice of your calling; nothing must interfere with it; encourage a love for it; be prompt and ready to administer to suffering when called upon, and be equal to all which is demanded of you, in the present advanced state of medical knowledge. If you will add to this the higher motives of the true Christian, exercising your skill not only for the love of your fellow man, but as a duty to your Creator, you will have secured as much happiness in this world as may fall to the lot of man, and be prepared, so far as your own efforts can effect it, for the enjoyment of an eternal reward hereafter. The mere professional man, prompted only by ambition, can never be truly happy or satisfied; and he who is governed only by a desire for gain, degrades his calling, and reduces it to the lowest rank of occupations.

Another duty remains to be spoken of. You are citizens of this great Republic; in other forms of government the sovereignty is in the monarch who may be elected or hold his authority by Divine right; in this, every man constitutes a portion of that sovereignty; to be able to discharge properly his duty in this relation, he must be well informed, he must understand the nature of the institutions of his country, he must be acquainted with the history of past events, and informed upon those which are passing around him; he must be competent to separate truth from error; to distinguish between the patriotic propositions of the statesman and the specious sophistry of the designing demagogue; to estimate the difference between sectionalism and patriotism; to recognize the rights of the interests of the various sections of our country; in fact, to be a well-informed and patriotic citizen. I do not advise you to become involved in the turmoil of partisanship—to become active politicians—but to be capable, and always ready, to exercise the influence which your position gives you, and which your duty requires of you; by your counsels to check the growth of error, and assist in the establishment of a healthy public opinion; the neglect of this



duty, demanded of good citizens, has been the cause of much serious evil in our country; the public sentiment of the various sections has become vitiated; false doctrines, advanced by designing politicians for selfish purposes, have been received by the masses; bitter and angry feelings have been engendered; that respect for rights, and that fraternal feeling which formerly existed amongst the members of our wide-spread community, has been destroyed, and disunion, which, in times past past, was never dreamed of, much less advocated, is now openly proposed as a remedy for existing differences.

Upon you as citizens, so far as your influence extends, and it will not be small, devolves the duty of correcting this. By precept and example, by your advice and exhortations, you must assist in re-establishing a healthy, conservative spirit, such as shall conduct our glorious country to that destiny intended by the Almighty; to be foremost in all which is most useful to man; to demonstrate to the world that man is capable of self-control, of self-government, of those virtues which exalt him to a resemblance of his Creator, in whose image he was made.

In your professional career, you will have duties to yourselves, your patients, and to your professional brethren; the feelings of gentlemen, (according to others, what you demand for yourselves,) must be your guide; this feeling, softened and refined by benevolence, must govern you in your relation to your patients; this can never fail you; the gentlemanly and benevolent physician can never err in duty.

“To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night, the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

Cultivate an “*esprit de corps*.” Your interests are common to your profession; what benefits or injures one, has the same effect upon all. Let no prospect of immediate advan-

tage, or promotion in popular opinion, no unworthy ambition for success, tempt you from the path of honorable rivalry; but let your hope be, that by your course through life, at its close, you may have earned, and receive the commendations of the public, and the approbation of your brother practitioners. The good opinion of your professional brethren is worth all else to you in this world. Farewell!



